

1990

## Naval History: The Seventh Symposium of the U.S. Naval Academy

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through margins, the Navy's proud new destroyer class is referred to as the "Arkeugh Burke" [sic] and missing words have reversed the meaning of some paragraphs. Strange word constructions and spellings abound. Our thirty-ninth President is continuously cited as "Jimmie Carter" despite the fact that President Carter has always called himself "Jimmy." There is probably no other reference to "President Jimmie Carter" in existence.

All of these criticisms echo a recent review of Dr. Coletta's *A Survey of U.S. Naval Affairs, 1865-1917*, also from the same publisher. A pattern may be developing.

Theoretically, one should be able to appreciate the scholarly merits of the work despite such mere surface blemishes. However, the text is much too cursory for the naval historian or any "naval buff," and the general reader cannot help being disenchanted by the entire package.

The book's scholarly merits (i.e., factual information contained therein) are also hindered by its confusing organization. The author's intent is unclear; the all-too-brief introduction discusses continuing themes within America's naval heritage, yet the text plods through chronologically without extensive development of these themes. The introduction ends by posing the sort of rote final exam question that midshipmen have written thousands of blue books on: "Given the current international situation and knowledge of the military forces available to the West and to the Soviet Bloc, a rewarding exercise is to

determine what kind of Navy the United States should have in order to carry out its functions." Unfortunately, the book neither answers this question nor provides the tools to do so.

This third edition includes chapters on the Carter and Reagan naval and arms control policies, including Secretary Lehman's push for the 600-ship navy. However, the Maritime Strategy, presumably a vital element in current naval policy, is treated with the significance of a footnote. Better treatment of these topics may be found elsewhere.

Speaking of footnotes, there are none, giving further indication that the book was intended as an elementary text. Despite my respect for Professor Coletta, I would advise readers—especially those with no knowledge of naval history—to wait for a proofed and corrected fourth edition.

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Cogar, William B. *Naval History: The Seventh Symposium of the U.S. Naval Academy*. Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 1988. 302pp. \$50

This is a typical conference volume, a mixed bag. The collection includes examples of minor pedantry. But there are also a dozen that propose fresh interpretations of the naval past and these are of lasting value. Three papers discuss the design and engineering challenges of reconstructing a Greek trireme, and its accomplish-

ment as a success for naval history and experimental archaeology. Four authors discuss the USS *Monitor* project, the importance of the ship and the establishment of a national marine sanctuary over its remains. Among the authors who offer important reassessments, Bruce Collins discusses naval power in the Maori, Ashanti, and Boer wars and calls for better recognition of naval power as a feature of British imperial expansion. Edward Miller explains that War Plan Orange was not simple at all, but complex and adaptable. "War Plan Orange persevered for forty years and eventually won the war. What more can one ask of a great plan?" Marc Milner directs us to the contribution—and unexpected consequence—of the Royal Canadian Navy in the battle of the Atlantic, above all in shipping control and naval intelligence. During this campaign, undertaken in close coordination with the United States Navy, the RCN found "its north American roots." Lawrence Allin writes an arresting argument for truth-in-labelling for the battleship. The mystique of the battle-line was little tested in war, and battleship doctrine became a parochial shibboleth. Putting purposefulness back in its rightful place, Allin says of the battleship's role in the post-atomic age: "It must be seen and used for what it is: a weapon of high cost and great power and one of discrete and limited abilities."

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Martin, David C. and Walcott, John.

*Best Laid Plans*. New York: Harper & Row, 1988. 392pp. \$22.50

*Best Laid Plans* is a tightly written tale of treachery, heroism, and Washington intrigue—a real page turner. It could also be a history of national security affairs during the Reagan administration. It covers the major headline-capturing events of the 1980s, from the hostage rescue attempt in Iran, to the bombings of the U.S. Embassy and Marine compound in Beirut, air strikes on Libya, and arms-for-hostages deals.

*Best Laid Plans* is the best study yet written of contemporary terrorism and our nation's response. CBS Pentagon correspondent David Martin and *Wall Street Journal* national security correspondent John Walcott have teamed to produce an exhaustively researched, comprehensive look at a problem that both threatens our security and vexes our response mechanisms. The book excels on two planes.

First, the authors have captured the human impact of terrorism, ranging from the ordeal of U.S. hostages held in Lebanon to the fears and triumphs of the operators at Desert One, the pilots who forced down the Egyptian plane carrying the hijackers of the *Achille Lauro* and the crews who participated in the retaliatory bombing of Libya. They delve into the emotional and political pressures that defined the conflicts among, and crucial decisions made by, the White House, State Department, Defense Department, and Central Intelligence Agency. This